

THE BOOK OF HOSEA
Lesson 23, Chapters 13 and 14

We concluded at Hosea 13:9 last time, which begins a 3-verse section that is essentially a divine statement as part of an oracle that involves a controversy and a dispute. The dispute is that God is telling Israel what they have done wrong in their unfaithfulness to Him and their outright idolatry, and Israel is denying it and also in denial about what is happening to them. Let's re-read it.

RE-READ HOSEA CHAPTER 13:9 – 11

These 3 verses are God speaking; He begins by saying bluntly that He will destroy Israel. The verb form used here is in the perfect tense meaning the action has already begun. As we have seen in earlier verses and chapters Israel seems to be oblivious to what Hosea has been telling them. They are in full-blown denial. It's not that they don't recognize their precarious national situation of being on the verge of being conquered by Judah, and at the same time finally recognizing that Assyria poses an even bigger danger to their national sovereignty, it's that they still won't acknowledge that it is their God, Yehoveh, whom is behind the looming catastrophe because He is severely punishing them. Instead, they continue to plead for deliverance on their own terms, and run around trying to find gentile allies to rescue them, ignoring Hosea's message that their doom is assured and the process of their demise is already well under way. Since that *is* the unchangeable situation, then Israel's only rational response for the time being ought to be a most practical one: plan and prepare yourself and your households for survival in the coming bad times, and at the same time examine yourself to see where you have gone wrong, and then confessing your iniquity before Yehoveh. Therefore, in the second half of verse 9, Yehoveh essentially asks who it is that they think is going to save them? Of course, the implication is that since it is God that is against them, then God is the only one who can deliver them. And, He's already firmly said He is **not** going to deliver them. This Torah concept of Yehoveh being Israel's one and only deliverer from any and every type of trouble or enemy, Israel has forgotten because they've forgotten the Torah.

CJB Deuteronomy 33:26-29 ***26 "Yeshurun, there is no one like God, riding through the heavens to help you, riding on the clouds in his majesty. 27 The God of old is a dwelling-place, with everlasting arms beneath. He expelled the enemy before you and he said, 'Destroy!' 28 So Isra'el lives in security; the fountain of Ya'akov is alone in a land of grain and new wine, where the skies drip with dew. 29 Happy are you, Isra'el! "Who is like you, a people saved by ADONAI, your defender helping you and your sword of triumph? Your enemies will cringe before you, but you will trample down their high places."***

Hosea 13:10 refers to Israel's current government that is in chaos. If you cross-check between various Bible versions the opening words can be translated quite differently. The way the CJB has it ("so, now, where is your king?") is the most common approach. This is the same meaning that is ascribed in the Old Greek of the Septuagint (the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek that took place in the 3rd century B.C.). However, we find something different in the Masoretic Hebrew text. The opening of verse 10 is: "I shall be your king, then...". Interestingly this is way the KJV has it. Good arguments can be made for either translation but I think overall the context makes the way the CJB and the majority of other versions translate it to "so, now, where is your king?" the more likely. This is really a kind of sarcastic if not taunting remark that has 1Samuel chapter 8 in mind. It is another case in the Book of Hosea of God reminding Israel that their insistence to have, and depend upon, a human king was never His idea in the first place. Far from it: it was deeply offensive to God. There in Samuel we find these words:

CJB 1 Samuel 8:4-20 ***4 All the leaders of Isra'el gathered themselves together, approached Sh'mu'el in Ramah 5 and said to him, "Look, you have grown old, and your sons are not following your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." 6 Sh'mu'el was not pleased to hear them say, "Give us a king to judge us"; so he prayed to ADONAI. 7 ADONAI said to Sh'mu'el, "Listen to the people, to everything they say to you; for it is not you they are rejecting; they are rejecting me; they don't want me to be king over them. 8 They are doing to you exactly what they have been doing to me, from the day I brought them out of Egypt until today, by abandoning me and serving other gods. 9 So do what they say, but give them a sober warning, telling them what kinds of rulings their king will make." 10 Sh'mu'el reported everything ADONAI had said to the people***

asking him for a king. ¹¹ He said, "Here is the kind of rulings your king will make: he will draft your sons and assign them to take care of his chariots, be his horsemen and be bodyguards running ahead of his chariots. ¹² He will appoint them to serve him as officers in charge of a thousand or of fifty, plowing his fields, gathering his harvest, and making his weapons and the equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters and have them be perfume-makers, cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will expropriate your fields, vineyards and olive groves- the very best of them!- and hand them over to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take the ten-percent tax of your crops and vineyards and give it to his officers and servants. ¹⁶ He will take your male and female servants, your best young men and your donkeys, and make them work for him. ¹⁷ He will take the ten-percent tax of your flocks, and you will become his servants. ¹⁸ When that happens, you will cry out on account of your king, whom you yourselves chose. But when that happens, ADONAI will not answer you!" ¹⁹ However, the people refused to listen to what Sh'mu'el told them, and they said, "No! We want a king over us, ²⁰ so that we can be like all the nations, with our king to judge us, lead us and fight our battles."

So, in Hosea 13:9 - 11 God is essentially saying to Israel: remember long ago when through My Prophet Samuel I warned you that by demanding a human king you were rejecting Me as your king? And that I cautioned you about the disastrous consequences your kings would eventually heap upon you? And that eventually even the king's mighty military would not be able to save himself or you from enemies? But most importantly that when you finally realized that what I told you was true and you wanted Me back as your king, I'd refuse to help you? Well, after a long time, this is all happening to you right now, at this very moment, and it is I who am not only **not** going to rescue you, I'm the one who is going to lead an enemy to decimate you.

Likely this verse was penned by Hosea after King Hoshea's rebellion against Assyria (Hoshea stopped paying the agreed-to tribute to Assyria for the privilege of being a vassal state to Assyria) and it resulted with him being deposed and imprisoned by Shalmaneser, the King of Assyria for his treachery. That event marked the end of Israel's monarchy and from that time forward Israel no longer had an Israelite king. Israel would remain as a nation for just a couple more

years before the next king of Assyria, Sargon, invaded and conquered Israel and emptied the Land of the people.

Verse 11 says (again in line with what we read in 1Samuel 8) that it was in God's anger that He gave Israel a mortal king. That is, the people demanding that Samuel give them a king made Yehoveh so angry at them that, as a punishment for their rejection of God as their king, He gave them what they wanted rather than saying no. Saying "no" would have saved them from the many negative consequences that inevitably came about by having a series of human kings. And now, in God's wrath (that we're reading about in Hosea), He has ended Israel's monarchy and the people of Ephraim/Israel no longer have an Israelite government or Israelite king to look to for help. The Northern Kingdom's first king was Saul around 1030 B.C.; and their final king, Hoshea, was deposed from the throne by Assyria in 725 B.C. So, Israel had a series of human kings to rule over them for 3 full centuries. The only king of Israel that truly seemed to please God was David; and not because David was necessarily a good and moral man at all times (he wasn't). It has always perplexed Christianity, and it has caused Judaism to have to find a way to rationalize David's behavior because of their veneration of him, that at the same time we read of David committing evil things like adultery and murder, God says that David was a man after His own heart. I have little doubt that God's meaning concerns David's commitment to running the government of Israel generally in the same manner God would have run it... by refusing to allow the worship of foreign gods (idolatry) in his kingdom and by being unrelenting and courageous in trying to fight off pagan nations from getting a foothold in the Promised Land... it certainly was not about David's personal life that was riddled with serious moral failures. But beginning with his son Solomon, the way Israel's government functioned would change for the worse.

Turn your Bibles to Hosea as we read the final verses of chapter 13.

RE-READ HOSEA CHAPTER 13:12 – end

Depending on your Bible version, some of you may have a 16th verse that ends this chapter. Other versions put this 16th verse as verse 1 of chapter 14. We'll talk about this a little more, shortly.

The CJB interpretation of verse 1 that begins "Ephraim's guilt has been wrapped up" is a poor one. Rather, it should read "the iniquity of Ephraim is bound up". The issue is the word "guilt" versus the word "iniquity". All throughout Hosea (and generally in the Old Testament) "iniquity" is defined as the worst sort of sin in a hierarchy of sinful behaviors. The Hebrew word is **avon** and by no means does it translate to "guilt". So, the idea is that Ephraim's sins are classified as the worst of the worst. The meaning of iniquity being bound-up is that it is a **fait accompli**. What's done is done and it can't be undone. To say that her sin is stored away means it will not be forgotten or overlooked. These terms used were common in the Middle Eastern culture of the day. Shalom E. Holtz explains the use of the colloquial terms used in this verse. **"Neo-Babylonian trial records from the Eanna Temple at Uruk... show that when the temple authorities were informed of a misdeed, they would tie up and seal the physical evidence... for use in the subsequent proceedings against the offender"**. In other words, just as today the evidence from a crime scene is confiscated by the police and put into a secured evidence locker at the police station for use at the trial, so it was in antiquity in the Middle East. The term "bound-up and sealed" was used to describe the securing of the evidence. We find this same term and thought used in an earlier book of the Bible.

^{CJB} **Job 14:17** *You will seal up my crime in a bag and cover over my iniquity.*

Verse 13 is another one that is less than satisfactorily translated in the CJB. Where it says "the pain of being born will come to him", it should read "the pangs of childbirth come for him". So, in the CJB "him" (Israel) is the one being born and according to this translation he feels pain in being born. But the proper interpretation is that Israel feels the pains the woman (the mother) feels when she is giving birth to a child. A woman giving birth usually feels intense labor pains from her contractions, and so this birthing metaphor is used to compare the intense pain Israel feels for what is happening to it as a result of God's punishment for their iniquity. Why does Israel feel this kind of pain? Because, the verse continues, he (Israel) is not a wise child. Israel feels a pain that they didn't need to feel if only they hadn't been so sinful. Israel's pain is abnormal. So, Israel's unwise, ungodly choices destine it to destruction and a painful death.

The final words of this verse are equally poorly translated in the CJB, as they depict Israel about to emerge from the birth canal as it feels the pain. This makes no sense in the context of the passage. Rather, the proper sense of it is something like this: "Indeed, this is not an appropriate time to survive the process of giving birth". In very graphic and grueling language the idea is that it is probably better for Israel to die (like a mother dying in childbirth) than to have to go through what lay ahead of it. This is hyperbole; God is not suggesting that the people of Israel should somehow be sure they don't survive Assyria's take-over of Ephraim/Israel and the subsequent exile to foreign lands that they'll face.

Verse 14 presents us with another conundrum. To remind you: the terms Hosea uses are firmly rooted in 8th century B.C. Ephraim/Israel culture and language. Many of these terms are expressions that one had to be familiar with to fully understand. No doubt Hosea's first readers knew exactly how to take these words, however in much later times two primary but different paths of interpretation were developed to explain this passage. The first path is as an expression of hope for Israel. The hope is that Yehoveh will intervene and stand in the way of death and the grave for Israel. Or, alternately, Yehoveh leaves Israel to the death they deserve. We'll examine this a bit closer, but I'll jump to the bottom line for the moment. The final words of this verse say "Compassion (or pity) are hidden from My sight". Since the entire Book of Hosea is about judgment upon Israel, and that Israel has passed the point of possible redemption, then when God says that pity is hidden from Him it seems to me that it can only mean that God will not have pity on Israel so as to keep them from being punished (exile). Otherwise, we have God pitying the personified Sheol and Death. Therefore, I take this to mean that the overall sense of verse 14 is negative towards Israel; God will not stand in the way of Israel's demise. In fact, He will summon these spirit-rulers of death and dying and the grave so that the curses contained in the Covenant of Moses will commence.

CJB Deuteronomy 4:26 *I call on the sky and the earth to witness against you today that you will quickly disappear from the land that you are crossing the Yarden to possess. You will not prolong your days there but will be completely destroyed.*

With that understanding, then, this verse becomes a series of 4 rhetorical questions: Should God rescue Israel from **Sheol**? Should He redeem Israel from Death? Should Death be deprived of her plagues? Should **Sheol** be prohibited from casting her plagues? As used here, **Sheol** and Death are used as synonymous terms. These are personified terms and both refer to the domain where people who die are sent. However, at the same time they can refer to the spiritual beings that rule over that domain, which in other Old Testament passages are sometimes given the names of **Mot** and **Sheol**. So, when we realize that Death and **Sheol** can (when personified) refer to these underworld powers, then the meaning of this passage is that God is prepared to summon the spirit powers **Mot** and **Sheol** to come and do their dark jobs, which is to snatch people from life (in this case Israel) and usher them into the realm of the dead.

Verse 15 uses two metaphors (that are actually curses), which have double meanings. The first metaphor depicts Ephraim/Israel as a plant that is going to wither away and perish from a lack of water. The second metaphor is of a divine storehouse that represents where the fruits of Israel's blessings have been stored (up to now) for safekeeping. However, these storehouses will soon be stripped bare. Again, we have two curses whose source is the Law of Moses... the Torah. We find these curses in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 28 begins by explaining Israel's rewards for being faithful and obedient to Yehoveh.

CJB Deuteronomy 28:12 ¹² ***ADONAI will open for you his good treasure, the sky, to give your land its rain at the right seasons and to bless everything you undertake. You will lend to many nations and not borrow;***

But next a warning.

CJB Deuteronomy 28:15 ¹⁵ ***"But if you refuse to pay attention to what ADONAI your God says, and do not observe and obey all his mitzvot and regulations which I am giving you today, then all the following curses will be yours in abundance:***

Next a list of curses is provided, with the ones appropriate for what Hosea 13:15 promises beginning with the 23rd verse.

CJB Deuteronomy 28:23-25 ²³ *"The sky over your head will be brass and the earth under you iron. ²⁴ ADONAI will turn the rain your land needs into powder and dust that will fall on you from the sky until you are destroyed. ²⁵ "ADONAI your God will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will advance on them one way and flee before them seven. You will become an object of horror to every kingdom on earth.*

God is merely enacting exactly what He said He'd do for the violations Ephraim/Israel committed against the Covenant of Moses.

The beginning of verse 15 speaks of flourishing among the reeds. The east wind is a hot, dry, fiercely destructive wind that comes to dry up the necessary source of water for reeds to grow. The metaphors of a dying plant and Israel's treasure (their blessings) being plundered have the second application of referring to Assyria. It is Assyria that is the destructive wind from the east that will come and confiscate Israel's treasure (their land and crops). They will also plunder Israel's treasures of gold and silver and all their belongings that they had accumulated in the good and prosperous times. Death and *Sheol* will come to Israel by means of the vast Assyrian military forces leaving nothing but devastation, loss and tears in their wake.

Israel's mostly ill-gotten prosperity is in process of passing away.

I mentioned earlier that some Bible versions place a 16th verse at this point, while the remainder place the same verse as the first verse of the next and final chapter. However, in some respects, it doesn't belong in either the 13th or 14th chapters.

Let's begin by reading that verse (regardless of which place we find it in, it reads the same).

CJB Hosea 14:1 *Shomron will bear her guilt, for she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword, their little ones will be dashed to pieces and their pregnant women ripped open.*

Oftentimes the discrepancy of where a verse is placed in a chapter has much to do with whether we are reading words that come from Bibles based on the Greek Septuagint or alternately on the Hebrew Masoretic Text. That is not the case here. It's the Dead Sea Scrolls that may have answered in an interesting way exactly where this verse was supposed to appear in our Bibles and what thought process this verse was to be seen as in connection to. In the fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls Hosea that have been found, this verse is clearly separated from the verses of Hosea 13 and also from those of Hosea 14. That is, if we speak in terms of chapters, then this particular verse is very nearly its own separate chapter. But remembering that chapter and verse numbering is a very late innovation, and it is completely artificial, and such a system never existed in the oldest Bible manuscripts, and in fact chapter and verse numberings were created and inserted by a Christian scholar only about a 1000 years ago, then the placement of this verse in the Dead Sea Scrolls indicates that it was clearly meant as a stand-alone thought that comes as a sort of bridge or transition between the final words of what we call chapter 13, and the start of what we call chapter 14. So, this unique verse is not the ending thought of the words that come before it, nor the beginning thought of the words that come after it. The reason for this isn't clear, but in ancient Jewish literary thought it of course meant something. At the least it meant that it was viewed a unit of thought; it was a statement and an instruction that stands on its own, so I recommend that is how we take it.

Essentially the focus of this verse is the capital city of the Northern Kingdom... Samaria. Samaria was the location of the seat of government for the Northern Kingdom (like Washington D.C., or London or Moscow). From the vantage point of history, at the time Hosea wrote this part of his prophecy Samaria was about all that was left of the Northern Kingdom. Assyria had been attacking from the North, with Judah chipping away from the South. But most important is that Samaria is where King Hoshea reigned. Since he reneged on his treaty with Assyria that allowed him to remain in power provided he paid huge sums of tribute to Assyria (which he complied with for only a short time), Sargon, King of Assyria, determined to exact his furious revenge specifically aimed at Samaria and King Hoshea.

The first few words of this verse are translated a bit differently from version to version mainly due to the Hebrew verb that is used to explain what Samaria's

condition was due to her rebellion against God. Briefly, this verse says that Samaria bears her guilt, or she feels guilty, or she is devastated. The reason for all these different interpretations is because the verb used is the Hebrew word **asham** that either derives from the Hebrew word spelled **sheen-mem** or some Hebrew scholars say it should be **tav-sheen-mem**. The first spelling speaks of guilt, the second spelling speaks of desolation (Israel is made desolate because of their guilt). In either case the idea is that Samaria is suffering because she rebelled against Yehoveh, and her suffering is well deserved.

The next words are terribly gruesome and some Christian scholars say it is an expression of hyperbole and didn't really occur. That is, this speaks of infanticide by throwing babies off of cliffs or bashing their heads against something hard, as is ripping open the pregnant bellies of women to kill both the woman and her unborn child. I'm sorry but this is not hyperbole; there is record in other ancient Middle Eastern societies of this happening. We also find this indescribable atrocity mentioned in other parts of the Bible.

CJB Amos 1:13 *Here is what ADONAI says: "For the people of 'Amon's three crimes, no, four- I will not reverse it- because they ripped apart pregnant women just to expand their territory,*

Sadly, we also read that a king of Israel, Menachem son of Gadi, committed this same barbaric act against an enemy.

CJB 2 Kings 15:16 *From Tirtzah Menachem attacked Tifsach, all the people in it and its territory, because they had not opened their gates to him. So he sacked the city and ripped apart all its pregnant women.*

Assyria's siege of the walled city of Samaria lasted for 3 years. The Book of 2nd Kings chapter 17 recounts the siege of Samaria. Here is a short excerpt from that narrative about the siege that Hosea is telling us about.

CJB 2 Kings 17:5-12 *⁵ Then the king of Ashur invaded all the land, advanced on Shomron and put it under siege for three years. ⁶ In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Ashur captured Shomron. He carried Isra'el away captive to Ashur, resettling them in Halach, in Havor on the Gozan River and in the cities of the*

Medes. ⁷ This came about because the people of Isra'el had sinned against ADONAI their God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, out from under the domination of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They feared other gods ⁸ and lived by the customs of the nations that ADONAI had expelled ahead of the people of Isra'el and by those of the kings of Isra'el. ⁹ The people of Isra'el secretly did things that were not right, according to ADONAI their God. They built high places for themselves wherever they lived, from the watchtower to the fortified city. ¹⁰ They set up standing-stones and sacred poles for themselves on any high hill and under any green tree. ¹¹ Then they would make offerings on all the high places, like the nations ADONAI had expelled ahead of them, and would do wicked things to provoke the anger of ADONAI; ¹² moreover, they served idols, something ADONAI had expressly told them not to do.

As an important aside: we see, then, that Hosea was written well before 2Kings was written. Hosea prophesied what the writer of the Books of the Kings would eventually record as the historical outcome of what God told the people of the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim/Israel through His Prophet Hosea about what was going to happen to them. The 2 biblical Books of the Kings are more historical record than theological. Hosea is more theological than historical. But the way the books of the **Tanach** (the Old Testament) work in conjunction with one another... even though these books were written separately by different people, often centuries apart... highlights the critical principle that any worshipper of God should not simply cherry pick verses from various Bible books or even study some books but not others, or constantly hop around in the Bible if one hopes to glean meaning, truth and actual evidence of the validity and value of God's Word. It is a principle that I harp on... and urgently hope that each of you will adopt... that if you sincerely want to know God's message to humanity, then you must necessarily begin at the beginning, and study the Bible in chronological order. I understand the Church's fascination with the New Testament, but to study it before studying the Old Testament (starting with Genesis) will give you an incomplete, fuzzy (if not confused) view of what it is you are reading.

So, the second half of our verse speaks of the severe military action Assyria will take against the residents of the city of Samaria, and along with the termination of the government of Ephraim/Israel. The historical records of Sargon, King of Assyria at this time, say that not only did he exile all the Israelites to foreign

lands, but also that he captured and took captive 27,290 to be used as slaves. Moving on to what most Bibles label as verse 2...

After 13 chapters of judgment, judgment and more judgment, the 14th chapter presents a glimmer of hope with a promise from Yehoveh that Israel will return to their Land, and a new and better future for them will emerge. We should see this final chapter of Hosea as consisting of two distinct but closely related sections. Let's read all of Chapter 14.

READ HOSEA CHAPTER 14 all

The first section is verses 2 and 3 (or for some of you these verses are 1 and 2). Hosea gives to Israel a prayer that is not intended for the people of Ephraim/Israel that were currently being captured or deported, but rather for the remnants and descendants of those 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom to recite as the time for their return to their Land approaches ... a time far into the future from the days of Hosea. So, I'll say this another way: it is a prophetic prayer, the content of which applies to the End-Times 10 Lost Tribes of Israel. The second section begins with verse 4 (or for some of you verse 3), and it is Yehoveh promising to answer the prayers of His people when that time arrives.

The CJB does a poor job with verse 2. Perhaps the best translation comes from the YLT Bible version (Young's Literal Translation).

YLT Hosea 14:1 *Turn back, O Israel, unto Jehovah thy God, For thou hast stumbled by thine iniquity.*

While many other good Bible versions do a fine job with this verse, every last one determines to change one important word that is there in the Hebrew. They all say to "turn back to **the Lord**"; but that's not what this scripture verse says. Rather it says to "turn back to **Yehoveh** thy God". Every last English Bible omits God's formal name. This is important because it represents a statement to Israel that of the many gods worshipped by all the other nations (all of these "gods" being non-existent), it is Yehoveh (the One who DOES exist) that is Israel's God. I'll say something to you that I've repeated scores of times in Torah Class lessons hoping that someday the impact of it will find a home in all Believers: in the

Hebrew Scriptures God's name (YHWH) appears more than 6,000 times. But in Christian Bibles you will find it no more than a dozen times, and in some versions fewer than that. I cannot say with certainty why that is because so many different versions were written by so many different people over a rather long period of time. However, my suspicion is that underlying it all there remains within Christianity the desire to distant itself not only from the Jewish people, but more importantly from the God of the Old Testament, by implying that the God of the New Testament (Jesus) has replaced Him. So, in English Bibles, even in the Old Testament, the name of God the Father is intentionally obscured such that every time we come to God's name (YHWH... Yehoveh) instead we see the word "Lord" inserted (which is always a substitute for God's name), so our thoughts naturally to go to The Son, Jesus (Yeshua) and not to His Father, Yehoveh, because to a gentile, Church-going Christian a synonymous name for Jesus *is* "Lord".

The Hebrew word that is used to render the English "turn back" or "return" is ***suvah***. The more modern way (especially in the Church) that this thought is presented is "repent". So, the underlying meaning of "repent" is to turn... to turn away from our sin and instead towards righteous behavior. For the ancient Israelites to "turn back to Yehoveh" meant only one thing: to turn back to the written Torah and the Law of Moses... to the ways of life, ritual and behavior it establishes. And, Believers in Yeshua of every ilk and denomination, that is exactly what it still means in the New Testament. To repent is to give up bad behavior in exchange for good behavior... behavior that includes our religious worship practices... but only as it is carefully prescribed in the Torah as opposed to our vast array of manmade religious doctrines and personal preferences. At this point let me make a couple of things very clear lest I be misunderstood. By no means I am saying that the Old Testament has greater authority than the New. Nor I am saying that the New Testament is absent teaching about proper behavior. But it is only in the Law of Moses that we'll find a concise, God-ordained moral law code of behavior laid down. This is why in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 5, Yeshua clearly insisted that His coming did NOT abolish the Torah, nor did it change one iota of it. And, Christ expects His followers to obey the Torah because it will remain in operation and relevant until AFTER the Millennial Kingdom comes and goes, when a re-creation brings about a passing

of the current heavens and earth, and the appearance of a new heavens and earth.

So, the bottom line is that to "repent" means to turn to the behavioral ways of God's written Torah. Why must Israel turn (or re-turn)? Because they had given in to their iniquities by means of turning away from God's Torah. Iniquities are the worst of the worst sins. As outlined in Hosea, those "worst" sins were idolatry.

As modern Believers and followers of Jesus Christ... whether you choose to label yourself as Christian, Messianic, Catholic, Orthodox, Coptic, or whatever... we have been infected with a somewhat newer doctrine that has emerged that is entirely "grace" focused. In fact, the focus on grace is often so one-sided that the concept of our behavior... our works... as important for a Believer is said to not only be irrelevant but it is actually problematic. That is, our behavior doesn't and shouldn't matter; it's what we believe in our hearts that God looks to. All of our bad behavior (whether out of our ignorance or from outright rebellion) no longer has relevance to our lives because grace covers it all. Thus, if we choose to change our poor behavior to be more biblically based and in line with God's commandments, we may be shunning the Salvation Christ gave us as a free gift of grace and instead we are trying to "work our way to Heaven". This accusation is, of course, not true nor (frankly) is it biblical or even rational...it is illogical... but it is what is chucked at those religious Jews who try to follow the Torah. And, often, it is what any Christian who speaks too much of "good works" or being obedient gets presented with. Grace is not wrong; but grace and grace alone as a doctrine is an imbalance and a misrepresentation of God's Word. Over and over, we find in the Holy Scriptures that the fruit of our trust in God... which is our behavior, our works... is what God judges. Thus, to repent, meaning to turn from our sins to God, which inherently means to turn to the written Torah, also inherently means to change our behavior and to produce good fruit (good works) instead of continuing to produce bad fruit (to exhibit wrong behavior). At the same time, the next verse of Hosea 14 (when properly understood) tells us that our good behavior is only one part of the equation. The other part must involve sincere trust in God... which, since Christ's advent and crucifixion, means to also trust in God's Son. That is, good behavior and good works (while expected of us)

have to come out of our faith and trust in Yehoveh and Yeshua, and from the truth and authority of the Bible.

Let's stop here for today. Next week we will finish chapter 14 and conclude our study of the Book of Hosea.